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BACK AGAIN.

BACK again to dear, old, misty, grumbling England—back again to London fog and mud, and sturdy snobishness, from the glittering Alpine snow, and the deep-blue Italian lake, and the bowing, close-cropped Monsieur. Hurrah! for home, after a summer away on the paper-sanded, flimsy-journaled, many-hatted, harness-roped, table-d'hôtel continent. The run back was delicious. I had had some business to do abroad, and therefore could not return directly the whim took me. I was bound to remain up to a certain date, whether I grew tired of foreign scenery and cooks or not. But directly the term of my engagement was up, I hastened back, partly because I had pressing business at home, partly because I was getting rather bored by Monsieur. Excellent fellow; we English owe him more than we can repay; we give him a change, no doubt, when he visits us, but small entertainment. We are too glum to be immediately ridiculous, and too expensive to permit economy. Monsieur begins to spend more, and laugh less, directly he crosses the Channel. One thing, however, we do for him—we whet the love of home; in that we mutually interchange good offices.

When I sat down in the great *salle-à-manger* at Belladogana for the last time, and for the last time the waiter skated up, and said, X, which I gratified him every day by understanding as an inquiry whether I would have eggs for breakfast—when, as I say, I sat there for the last time, and thought that the wheels of the diligence were probably being already greased, preparatory to its carrying me away at eleven o'clock A. M. that very day, I was glad. I had seen the season begin and end; I had chatted with the early tourists, and bon-voyaged the late; I had seen them come pale and dapper, and go away sunburned and travel-stained; I had watched the transition from a modest spirit of inexperience to one of insolent cynicism; and now they had all gone. The small Swiss inns were shut up, the big ones in the towns nearly empty. The bustling crowd had melted down to a few loiterers working their way homewards, or now and then a family passing into Italy for the winter, before the snow got too deep on the passes for *Paterfamilias*. There were but a few trickling drops in the channel of the great summer-touring stream. My wife and I found ourselves alone on several

occasions at the breakfast-hour in the largest hotels, and took our meal in a corner of a huge apartment, like two mice in a barn. Most of the waiters who are hired for the summer had left; the small remnant read the papers openly in the salon, or smoked without rebuke at the door of the inn.

My last resting-place was one of the large establishments in the Italian lake district. The low hills round Como and Maggiore were powdered with snow; the chesnuts were all beaten down and housed; the paths which in the height of summer were checkered with the shade of interlacing boughs, now rustled with withered leaves; the winter service of diligences, &c., was begun; guides had no one to follow them; but the scenery of the lake district was far more lovely than in the full-blooded autumn, with its heat and dust.

It was very lovely, but we were glad to be gone; and the nearer we got to England, the faster we went. It seemed as if the speed was accelerated as we approached the busiest metropolis of Europe. At first, we crunched slowly up the old familiar Alpine road, now white with snow, and hedged with icicles, the hoar-frost dusting our shaggy horses as we crossed the summit. The trot down the other side was followed by a passage in a lake steamer, whence, again, the pace was increased on a Swiss railway. A long express took us with more safety than swiftness to Paris, and a shorter one whisked us at very tolerable speed to our port of departure. Once at Dover, however, and seated in the carriage, we were reminded of English expedition by our tickets being immediately collected; and then, *phit!* the engine screamed, and we ran smack into London without a pause, the Sydenham Palace having apparently been moved to the entrance of the tunnel under Shakespeare's Cliff.

Perhaps the first sensation of surprise on a return to England, after even a few months' absence, is caused by the great proficiency in the English language exhibited by illiterate people. Railway guards, cabmen, and little rude street-boys converse in it without hesitation; it is most remarkable.

But let us to our retrospect—back again. Now that I have kicked the carpet-bag into a corner, and tasted the first returning sense of possession, let me think what contrasts strike me with the freshest force.

Imprimis, London is the cleanest town I know; yes, in fog, mud, or thaw. Think of its smells—what are they? Have they any peculiar edge or striking

variety? No doubt, in some hot summers, the Thames has produced a steady mass of odour; but as a rule, the streets are scentless. As to the Slums, as they are called, I visit them every day, but I never come across anything so keen and nasty as I do even in renovated Paris. As for Rome, pheugh! ramble about a ruin, but hold your nose. As for Naples, is not the deep blue of the Mediterranean tinged—no, not tinged, but grossly dyed with sewerage in face of the town? Walk along the beach of that tideless sea, but do not attempt to sit down on it. There is no smoke without fire, so the dirt of continental towns can be detected by as unmistakable a symptom. Mischievous dirt betrays itself. Nature did not give us noses merely to blow, or adorn a profile; they tell us what is bad to breathe and see; but in London they seldom convey a warning of the presence of dirt, because there is none. Simple mud is harmless enough; it is a witness of clouds and water-carts; but it is clean: we don't shudder when it sticks to us.

Another continental fallacy is touching the politeness of foreigners. Tompkins converses after a fashion with the conductor of a diligence or the boatmen on a lake. He is struck with the native ease and pleasantness of their manner; he compares them to those of cabbies or the steersman of a penny-boat, and remarks to Mrs Simpkins that the lower orders abroad are infinitely more courteous and conversable than those at home. Well, I suppose you are a judge of good-manners, Mr Tompkins, and I hope you always speak civilly to your 'inferiors,' when not checked by an imperfect acquaintance with the language you employ; but I suspect that half your impressions are influenced by your very partial knowledge of French or German. You don't know how to be coarse and arbitrary in these tongues yourself; and much of what you take for natural ease in the *conducteur*, would be vulgar familiarity if you only understood what he said. Translate the gallant speeches of the *cicerone* to signora into flippant cockney, and you would call him an impertinent rascal to speak so to your wife.

As to the good-manners of the middle classes, we cannot call them conspicuous at meals. There is an apparent wantonness of indelicacy in some which no custom can excuse—a greedy, noisy process of eating, which could hardly be found in their grade in England. See how Monsieur will gnaw the bones of a fowl—and he always has some to exhibit on—or watch him cut up his portion into swallowable pieces, preparatory to an uninterrupted disposal of it, and then reconsider your sentence about his politeness. He wins the character mainly by bowing; there he excels us; a pot-boy takes off his hat to another pot-boy. We associate the gesture with ceremonious courtesy; practice makes him perfect in the obeisance; and we compare his salutation with the gruff greeting or inelegant nod of the corresponding Briton. You may see a Frenchman uncover his head when he goes into a neighbour's shop, but you don't see an Englishman spit on the floor when he makes a morning call. There—that will do; let us turn to a different test of good taste.

Somewhere or another, I read some strictures on the vulgarity which distinguishes our countrymen in writing their names on monuments and walls. But here he is utterly distanced by Monsieur. Every available inch about continental sights is scribbled over with foreign names. The other day I was on the

top of Milan Cathedral; the highest landing-place is dingy with signatures, the statues even being covered with a coat of black-lead. I noticed this to our attendant, and he said it was no use washing them, they were defaced again at once. Let us be fair; give our neighbours their due; and let our own good taste and feeling express themselves in corresponding manners; but do not let us cry down the defects in English courtesy which we notice at once, because our ignorance of the language, or want of presence of mind, prevents our observing the drawbacks to foreign politeness.

A word as to foreign food. I was struck with its monotonous variety. There is always an embarrassing amount of dishes with a want of hearty material. The dinner at the *table-d'hôte* impresses the simple tourist at first, but in time it loses its effect. For genuine soups and solids, commend me to an English cook; but I grant you that the intermediate class of dishes, neither liquid nor substantial, are to be found in their unsatisfactory abundance far more plentifully in the produce of a foreign kitchen.

It is notorious, however, that we claim excellence in comfort. After all, says the traveller, give me English comfort. Paterfamilias, fresh from the continent, embraces his bed, and smiles upon his soap-dish with genuine affection. But we must not be too sharp about this notion of comfort. In many respects, the comfort of English travellers is studied more abroad than at home. Compare the scalding gulp at our railway refreshment-room with the well-proportioned meal provided on your journey in France. Compare their carriages with some of ours, and—among many minor luxuries—the facilities for smoking. Moreover, do you not travel with less anxiety about luggage abroad? Does not it add to your comfort to know that you are not responsible for anything when once you have that limp, gritty, little record in your purse of the weight, number, and fare of your articles of luggage? Is not the arrival at an inn on the continent more comfortable than in England? Are not the beds—yes, I say it, however devoted Paterfamilias may be to his four-poster—are not the beds generally delicious?

The fallacy lies in this—we compare *foreign hotel* comforts with those of our own *house*. I believe the contrast would be greater if we had to pay the bills and submit to the vexations of English inns.

But leaving this question of comforts, what other contrasts have left their impressions still fresh upon the mind? I was struck in entering London with the sodden, wretched look of one particular class amongst the poor. I came in by gas-light, and saw them about the public-houses. There was a staleness of face, and air of soiled limp finery about them, which I did not see abroad. No doubt, the beggars of the continent are often disgusting; but they chatter and squabble with a vivacity which saves them from despair. But these poor English people I mean are not beggars; they slip and slouch about in silent, dogged wretchedness, their force of temper coming occasionally to a head in a sudden exchange of loud-shrieked abuse and a duet of curses. I confess this saddened me. Merry England! No; that is not the adjective. We must be content with our privilege and characteristic of grumbling. An Englishman is never happy without a grievance. He affects to rejoice in being free, and secretly wonders that a tattered Mossoo of the third estate, with his accumulation of social and religious restrictions, can grin and caper about as he does. Wonder? Why wonder? Is not the child happy on the nursery floor? Does not he smile through his tears? So with the subjects of these foreign 'paternal' governments, which, whatever their faults, certainly do try to make things immediately pleasant to the very poor: witness Bomba's patronage of the lazzaroni. Ignorance is often bliss, though wisdom be not folly.

But of all the retrospects—now that I am sitting in my own study, with my papers about me within, and my work to do without—nothing touches me with so deep a feeling of compassion as the case of permanent residents abroad. I don't mean the invalids, whose search for health occupies and interests them, but the listless, chattering people who live at hotels, and have nothing to do. There is something more than dreary, something appalling in their state. They are the centre of no family, no village, no circle, no set even of tradesmen—nothing abides by them. They move from inn to inn with less hold on the human race than the postboys who help to drive them. Even the very courier, who seems as detached a dot of humanity as any man, is earning his bread by fitting from place to place, and wearing out the signs of his distinctive nationality. He earns his bread by severing himself from his home; but he has probably a wife somewhere, and children who send him letters in large printed characters, with their love and a kiss. Your wandering inn-haunter, however, is earning nothing, loving nothing. In most cases, he is pleasing, voluble, and heartless. He makes the acquaintance of everybody, talks about everything, and will some day be found sick and frightened by the waiter, and die alone in a crowded hotel, to the disgust of the landlord, who will smuggle out his corpse by night, and take care that all the household look as if nothing were the matter.

But joy to the man who has a welcome home, and faces the old familiar work with fresh and buoyant heart. Nothing like a pause, and a view of our position from a distance. If you would see the battle, you must mount a hill; and as each man is more or less his own general, it is well for him to step aside out of the smoke and noise for a while, and see how matters look from without. The whole of a scheme reveals itself: we see the tendency of some favourite plan; we decide on cutting off that, on dropping this, on securing such and such a result. We have time to breathe and look about us; we know where objects lie when we return to the battle—our short excursion has shewn us a map of the field; we spare our strength, and are stronger still; we work not only with freshened spirits, but with a far clearer understanding of what we are about, when we come 'back again.'

THE METRIC SYSTEM.

PARLIAMENTARY blue-books do not generally belong to a popular class of literature, but now and then there appears one that recommends legislative enactments which, if carried out, must affect the everyday-life of the whole community. One such has recently appeared upon the subject at the head of this article, and as but few of our readers will see the book themselves, and fewer still be disposed to wade through the mass of evidence, so as to get a fair idea of the contents, we will put before them briefly their meaning, and the action which it is proposed to take thereon.

The metric system, then, is the system of measures, weights, and coins which was some years ago adopted in France, and has been gradually making its way among many other continental nations, and even in America. Russia, also, on the eve of a change in its system, is inclined to adopt the metric, but is waiting to see the course taken by England, which is being rightly regarded as becoming every day more and more the centre of the commercial world.

As we know the great and natural indisposition to all change, especially when it involves a dislocation of any of our common usages, we think it will be worth while to call attention to the inconveniences of

our own system, if system it can be called. There are in this country not less than ten different measures of weight, independent of local variations. The bushel of wheat means nearly a score of different quantities in as many towns; and it is bought and sold by a multitude of other standards than the bushel in various parts of the kingdom. An acre of land has several different meanings; so has a stone; and in almost every article that can be measured or weighed there is a lack of uniformity of standard. Moreover, even if these local variations were abolished, and there remained no other than the authorised tables of weights and measures, the learning of them by every boy and girl, and the use of them in arithmetic in after-life, form a very serious impediment to a ready and accurate use of figures amongst all classes of the people. To learn the actual influence of this cumbrous system upon education, the council of the International Association for establishing a uniform system of money, weights, and measures, some time since issued circulars to a large number of persons engaged in teaching in various parts of the country, asking what time they considered would be saved in the teaching of arithmetic by the adoption of the metric system. Opinions of course varied as to the amount, though all were unanimous as to the advantage; but the average estimate was this: that of the years ordinarily devoted to arithmetical teaching, from one to two might be certainly saved, and therefore devoted to the pursuit of higher branches of the same subject, besides making pleasant a study which, under our system, excites almost unmitigated disgust. Indeed, we have little doubt that it is from this cause that among Frenchmen there is generally so much more knowledge, at least of the elements of mathematics, than in England, because their arithmetic can be learned in half the time that ours can, and when learned can hardly be forgotten; whereas every English teacher will testify that his work of teaching arithmetic is never done, for however advanced his pupils are in mathematics, they must be periodically drilled in arithmetic, or they will forget it.

A more weighty argument, however, with the majority will be the evidence of several men in the class of mechanics, who testified that the system could be learned by average workmen in two, or, at most, in four weeks, and that when it was learned, they were very unwilling to recur to the cumbrous English system.

Though, in common use, coins figure as of the greatest importance, yet, as the whole metric system is founded upon the measure of length, we will describe it in the natural order.

The standard of length is the metre, which is a ten-millionth part of the meridian of the earth. The length of the complete meridian was deduced from an accurate measurement of a part of a meridian between Dunkirk and Barcelona, and the unit of length thus obtained is equal to about 39½ English inches; more accurately, it is 39·371, or 39 $\frac{3}{4}$ English inches. All linear measures larger than this proceed by steps of 10, and the names are derived from the Greek prefixes, *deca*-, *hecto*-, *kilo*-, so that the terms decametre, hectometre, kilometre indicate respectively 10, 100, 1000 metres; but all subdivisions of the metre, descending tenfold every step, are indicated by the Latin prefixes, *deci*-, *centi*-, *milli*-; so that the words decimetre, centimetre, millimetre indicate respectively one-tenth, one-hundredth, and one-thousandth of a metre. It is plain that any given length expressed

in metres can be immediately reduced to the multiples or higher denominations by *dividing* by 10, 100, 1000; or can be reduced to the lower denominations or submultiples by *multiplying* by 10, 100, 1000; and since the decimal point in any number, as 375·862 metres, separates the whole numbers to the left from the decimal or fractional part to the right, the mere moving of this point to the right one, two, or three places will be equivalent to *multiplying* it by 10, 100, 1000—that is, reducing it to decimetres, centimetres, and millimetres; and the moving it to the left one, two, or three places is equivalent to *dividing* it by 10, 100, 1000—that is, converting it into decametres, hectometres, and kilometres. Hence there is no other reduction whatever but the simple moving of a decimal point.

From the linear measures are deduced the measures of surface. The unit of superficial measure is the *square* of the decametre or length of ten metres, and is called the *are*. This derives its greatest importance from its being employed in the measurement of land. Only one multiple and one submultiple of the *are* are employed, namely, the hectare and centiare; the hectare is equal to about 2½ English acres.

We next proceed to measures of capacity. These are the same for solids and for liquids, and would therefore supersede our dry measure, wine, and ale and beer measures. The unit is the *litre*, which is the cube of the decimetre or tenth of a metre; but for convenience it is generally reduced to cylindrical form. Its multiples and submultiples are named from the Greek and Latin prefixes, precisely as we have explained in the case of the metre. The litre is equivalent to about 1½ English pints, and the kilolitre to 220 gallons. Of course all volumes, such as the capacity of a room, or the solid contents of a mass of stone or brick work, are expressed in the cubes of the linear measure, just as in the English system they are expressed in the cubes of the linear inch, foot, or yard.

In immediate connection with the measures of capacity are the weights. The unit or standard is the *gramme*, which is generally Anglicised into *gram*, and is the weight of the volume of water contained in the cube of a centimetre, when the water is at its greatest density. All other weights are derived from it, as has been shown in the case of the metre and litre, by the employment of Greek and Latin prefixes. The *gram* is used for weighing light and small substances, as a medical dose, or a letter, and is nearly 16 grains troy; the *kilogram* is used for heavier substances, and is equivalent to about 2½ lbs. troy.

Lastly, come the coins. There are but two moneys of account—the *franc*, and its hundredth part, the *centime*. The *franc* is the unit or standard, and consists of five grams of standard silver, with a small portion of copper alloy; and, as is well known, is equivalent to about tenpence English.

The *centime* is a small copper coin, whose diameter is a centimetre, and weight a gram; so that one hundred centimes placed in a row would give the length of a metre; or used as a weight, they would give a hectogram, or tenth of a kilogram. Hence every centime forms at the same time a coin, a measure, and a weight.

We must not omit to remind the reader that though tenths, &c., are the most noticeable divisions in a decimal system, yet halves and quarters, which are the most natural divisions in common life, are very readily expressed in decimals, as well as in common fractions, and could be employed in everyday transactions, in perfect harmony with the metric system.

We may remark that a decimal system has long been in use in all bullion and mint transactions; and that in the manufacture of Armstrong guns, where extreme accuracy is desired, the superintendent of the factory gave evidence that this accuracy not admitting

an error of a thousandth of an inch, could not be guaranteed without the use of a decimal system of measures. Indeed, in some of the principal manufacturing of machines and engines, the metric system has for some time been in full operation. And such is the simplification of work which would ensue from its general adoption, that it is computed that the London and North-western Railway Company would save £10,000 per annum; and that the government would annually save in all its departments from a quarter to half a million sterling.

Having now explained the system, we will briefly sum up the verdict of the parliamentary committee. As they found that much difference of opinion existed even among warm advocates of the system as to the advisableness of a compulsory introduction of it, they came to the conclusion to recommend that the government should endeavour to pave the way for its introduction in the following ways: That the use of it be rendered legal; that a department of weights and measures be established in connection with the Board of Trade; that government should sanction the use of it in levying the customs' duties; should prescribe it as one of the subjects of examination for those seeking employment in the Civil Service; that the gram should be used as a weight for foreign letters and books in the post-office; and lastly, that the Committee of Council on Education should require it to be taught in all schools which are assisted by government grants.*

In looking at the probability of the system being adopted here, a most important question arises; namely, what should be the names employed? It has been suggested that our present names should be retained with the new measures, weights, &c.; but it has been judged, and we think rightly, that such a step would involve increased confusion: and that it would be far better to give new names to new things. Indeed, the ill success of a similar experiment tried in Holland is pretty decisive against such an attempt. But it is allowed that the French names would be alarming to English ears, and that our general population would have an invincible dislike to change their short words, as foot, yard, ounce, pound, &c., for kilograms and hectolitres. To meet this difficulty, a very ingenious system has been devised by one of the witnesses, Mr Fellows of Wolverhampton, whose evidence is well worth consulting by any who wish to examine the question minutely. He recommends that the thousandth of a metre be called *Th-o-m* or *Thom*, but a thousand metres, *Th-e-m* or *Them*; so also a hundredth of a gram, *H-o-g* or *Hog*; and a hundred grams, *H-e-g* or *Heg*—where it will be readily seen that the principle of this nomenclature is to take the initials of the number and of the measure or weight, inserting the letter *o* in the case of submultiples or parts of the unit, and the letter *e* in the case of the multiples. This certainly secures not only the briefest names that could be devised, but it explains the value of the quantity expressed in a manner which can hardly be mistaken by a person of the most ordinary capacity.

But whatever be the merits of the system, it can never thoroughly make its way among the inhabitants of these kingdoms, until at least the educated majority have become satisfied that its introduction would be a boon. In order that they may even have a chance of doing so, they must know it, and we therefore think we are doing the community a service by bringing it before them, and submitting it to their examination; for we are convinced that if its adoption could be secured by general consent, it

* An account of the proposed Decimal System of reckoning money, with examples and exercises, has been given as an Appendix to the Treatises on Arithmetic in *Chambers's Educational Course*.

would do much, by its simplicity and dispatch, to aid in securing, in an age of keen competition, the undoubted supremacy of our empire as the centre of commerce, and the market of the world.

A GUIDE UNDERGROUND.

'It's very inconvenient just now, doctor. The tunnel is in a critical state; the bridge over Bilsbro' Water requires frequent supervision; and the trustees of the new church at Stoneham have asked for estimates about the spire. In six weeks' time, now, or two months at farthest'—

'In six weeks, or two months at farthest, Mr Parkes, your health would have sustained irreparable injury,' interrupted Dr Bromley in his cool, self-reliant manner. 'You must try and forget tunnels, bridges, and spires for the remainder of the summer at anyrate. Come, come; no one should be better aware than yourself that no material can bear a constant strain, and least of all, the nervous system of an overworked man. You have placed yourself in my hands, and must follow my prescriptions.'

The principal of Dr Bromley's recommendations had been perfect repose from the care and worry of business, combined with pure country air and health-giving exercise. I grumbled, but I could not help admitting in my heart that the physician was right. I, William Parkes, at your service, senior partner in the well-known engineering firm of Parkes and Spiller, suffered materially from anxiety and incessant hard toil in my professional duties. I had never been robust even in youth, and now, in middle age, I had not called in the friendly aid of Dr Bromley a day too soon.

Spiller, a good-natured fellow always, very willingly undertook to take my share of the work, for the next two, or even three months, upon his own shoulders; and I repaired to a pretty and thoroughly rustic hamlet, situated in one of the wildest dales that lie embosomed among the spurs of High Peak, in Derbyshire. The village had not yet been turned into a watering-place; it lay at some distance from any railway, and the wretched state of the cross-road that led to it helped, no doubt, to preserve its primitive aspect of coy seclusion. There was a decent inn, though small; for sometimes artists would be seen sketching the quaint rocks that rose abruptly beside the clear trout-stream, and anglers would make the Duke's Head their sleeping quarters. The fishing was indeed reported to be very good, although I cannot say that I met with any remarkable success in whipping the water. By the doctor's advice, I had provided myself with a limber hickory-rod, a creel, a landing-net, and a more imposing collection of flies, lines, gaff-hooks, brass winches, and artificial minnows, than ever old Izaak dreamed of; but I was sorely lacking in the skill of that great master.

'Stick to fishing, even though you hook nothing but your own fingers,' Dr Bromley had said: 'you must keep moving, Mr Parkes, and force yourself to take an interest in quiet country pursuits, or your mind will be back in Leeds while your body is in Derbyshire, and the fresh air and sunlight will be robbed of half their virtue.'

Well, I complied with these instructions. I am not a man to do things by halves; and just as I like to have elbow-room in my own profession, which I understand, and which I have been fond of from boyhood, so do I think a doctor ought to be listened to, if it be worth while consulting him at all. What with long walks to every point of view within a pedestrian's reach, with trying to fish, and with gossiping with the few unemployed mortals I could find, the first fortnight slipped away very pleasantly. Then, indeed, I began to yawn disconsolately, and time hung heavily on my hands. It is always difficult for a toilworn man, naturally and

habitually active, to remain contented in idleness. Rest, downright rest, is, strangely enough, only attainable by the lazy and the careless. The best repose for those whose life has been one of exertion is a total change of occupation; but something they must have to engross their energies of mind and body. Do what I would, my thoughts persisted in flying back to the schemes and projects of the busy world I had left, to the world of stone and iron, where man's wit and patience are pitted against the forces of nature, and where every success is hailed as a new triumph for our race. This was a breach of rules, and did me harm; but what could I do? I could not spend more than two hours over the *Times*; I could not walk for ever, and there was not an educated person, except the curate, within miles. My chief ally was a stalwart young fellow, with frank blue eyes, and a very pleasant, honest face, Harry Meade by name. I do not exactly know what post he was supposed to fill in the household of the little inn whose best sitting-room I occupied; but whenever the landlady called for 'Boots,' or 'Porter,' or 'Ostler,' up came Harry, always fresh and smiling, and he took charge of the traveller's horse and gig, or polished his Balmorals, or carried his portmanteau upstairs to No. 3 or No. 5, as promptly as if that had been the business of his life. What with the garden and the hayfield, the miscellaneous work of the inn, Harry had enough to do, and yet he found time in the cool evenings to give me many a practical lesson in trout-fishing. Thanks to him, I gradually became a little more expert, hooked my own clothes and the bushes less frequently, and sometimes had the satisfaction of beholding a spotted native of the brook fairly caught by my own rod and line, and scientifically brought to bank by Harry, who was adroit with the landing-net. My piscatorial education was far from perfected, however, when my partner, who still wrote to me from time to time, though avoiding, as much as possible, all business topics, happened to mention that our foreman, a valuable man, who had been for several years in our employ, intended to emigrate to Canada, where he had been offered the management of some works. This was a loss to us; but we had another person in our service who was fit for promotion, and the alteration would merely have caused some slight change in the pay and prospects of our subordinates, but for the difficulty of finding a light-porter as good as our present one.

'In short,' wrote Spiller, half in joke, 'I know of nobody in town, and unemployed, to whom I should like to assign Bates's place; so, if you do come across a fellow at once smart and honest, I shall be obliged to you to pack him off to me.'

'Bless me!' I exclaimed, as a sudden thought struck me, 'why, my tutor in the fishing department would be the very man. He would suit us; and our pay, with the certainty that advancement will follow good-conduct, would be sure to suit him. About character, however, one can never be too particular. I'll go to the landlady at once.'

The landlady, whom I found as usual, tranquilly knitting among the nets of lemons, the jugs and glittering glasses, of her snug bar, gave the best possible account of Harry Meade's honesty, sobriety, and steadiness. She had known him from a boy, and had nothing but good to tell. She frankly said that he would be a sad loss to the Duke's Head, but that she wouldn't stand in the lad's light, if so be that he got a chance to better himself, and get on in the world.

'I'm not quite sure, though, sir,' pursued the stout matron, eyeing me through her portentous silver-rimmed spectacles, 'that Harry Meade will accept your offer, though I'm certain he'll be thankful, as reason is. But his grandfather—the old Waterloo man, to whom Harry's been the most dutiful of sons,

I am sure—would be right down broken-hearted if he were to leave the village before the old man were laid in the churchyard; and then, sir, I believe Harry's keeping company with Lucy Brand—Widow Brand's daughter, a good girl, and'—

'Nonsense, Mrs Parsons,' said I rather tartly. 'What business has a youngster of twenty-two or three with courting and marriage, on sixteen shillings a week? Absurd! I shall put the case plainly to the lad, and tell him that if he throws away his present chance of rising in life, he's not very likely to get another.'

So saying, I took my hat, and sallied forth, determined to lose no time in letting my future light-porter know my benevolent intentions on his behalf, should he be sensible enough, as I could not doubt, to profit by the prospects held out to him. We are seldom sufficiently awake to our own failings, but I am well aware that one of mine is resentment whenever my friendly offices or well-meant counsels meet with rejection. I am not, I hope, an egotist or a vindictive person, but I own that it *does* nettle me when others of not half my years and experience will persist in preferring their own judgment to mine. Mrs Parsons had chafed my temper a little by the hint that my offer was likely to be refused, and refused on grounds which to a dry old bachelor like myself appeared frivolous and slight. I knew where old Meade's cottage was, for I had once or twice seen the gray-haired old soldier, his Waterloo medal on his breast, smoking his pipe among the sunflowers and marigolds of the little front garden, and had received his stiff military salute with a nod and a smile.

'I may as well speak to the old man upon the subject,' said I, as I strode through the village, and turned up the narrowing dale, along the banks of the brawling stream.—'I may as well speak to him, who has seen the world, and felt its rubs and buffets, as to his grandson, who is young and rash, and less likely to know on which side his bread is buttered. I like the young man, and if I am not much mistaken, he is one of those handy fellows who are half-engineers by nature. Who knows! he might be our foreman some day, and look forward to having a business of his own. The corporal will soon'—

Here I stopped short in my soliloquy, for in turning a sharp corner among the rocky boulders that lay strewn around, I almost ran against a pair of lovers, who were standing in earnest talk below the spreading boughs of a horse-chestnut tree. The shades of evening were falling fast, and the high rocks that rose above the valley had the effect of deepening the shadow, but I easily recognised not only Harry Meade, but his companion, Lucy Brand. The latter was a pretty girl, with dark hair and eyes, the daughter of an old widowed dame who dealt in tapes and bobbins, toffy and cakes, and such petty articles of traffic, in a small cottage-shop which was a humble outpost of the general shop and post-office at A—. Widow Brand was a poor and struggling woman, who had much difficulty in making both ends meet, but she was respected, and perhaps looked upon with a little awe in that quiet hamlet, on account of her superior education. She was indeed one of those persons who, to use the hackneyed phrase, had seen better days. Her husband had been overlooker of one of the Peak lead-mines hard by, and had been cut off in the prime of life by one of the accidents incidental to his hazardous calling. Yet Dame Brand had borne misfortunes bravely, and had contrived not only to provide for the maintenance of herself and child, but to teach the latter more than had been imparted to any other of the village maidens. The young people were rather startled by my sudden arrival, for the road was a lonely one, and no roofs except those of Mrs Brand, of old Meade, and of Jessop the carpenter, who dwelt some way from the

hamlet, were in sight. Harry touched his hat, and stepped back. Lucy curtsayed respectfully, and looked down at the daisy-spotted turf. It was evidently for me to speak.

'Meade, I want to speak with you a moment. I was going to your grandfather's, but as I have met you, I need go no further.'

Perhaps my tone was a little dry and harsh; the drier, possibly, because the sight of those two young folks, whispering together in the soft summer twilight, happy in their love, and confident in the future, stirred within me recollections of days long past, when, as Jonathan Oldbuck said, I did not think I should have been always a bachelor. Harry was evidently surprised at the alteration.

'I hope, sir,' he said, 'that nothing is amiss.'

'O dear me, no,' I replied; 'I want to have a few words with you, that is all, if you have leisure to attend to them.'

Already Lucy Brand was gone. I saw her shawl flutter as she turned the corner by the orchard-hedge, and lifted the latch of her mother's cottage. Harry's eyes followed her till she disappeared behind the leafy quickset, and then reverted to me. By this time, I had begun to recollect that nothing was more natural or fitting than this simple attachment between two young persons of the same rank and tastes, and that I had no business to meddle in the matter. 'However,' thought I, 'there is no hurry. Six or seven years hence, if all goes smoothly, will be quite time enough for Harry Meade to saddle himself with the encumbrance of wife and family. And now for the proposition.' So I proceeded to offer Harry the post of light-porter, laying before him fairly the certainty of rising in station and substance, in the event of his continuing to merit the approval of the firm of Parkes and Spiller.

'Thirty shillings a week, to begin with, are good wages,' said I in a business-like manner; 'and if you have a knack for drawing and a good eye for measurement, you will soon be able, with a little instruction, to rise to something better. We have plenty to do, and with us the labourer who is really worthy of his hire is never stinted. I think you told me the other day that you had had sufficient schooling to read and write well, and to be master of the first four rules of arithmetic.'

'Yes, sir,' said the young man timidly; 'but'—

'Pooh, pooh!' said I, with patronising good-nature; 'I am sure you will soon get on, and will suit us nicely. You will have a good deal to learn, of course, about the properties of metals, mensuration, and building, before you are capable of taking the superintendence of a working-party, but as light-porter you will have plenty of spare time for study. Mrs Parsons gives you, I am glad to find, the best of characters. Continue as you have begun, and you may die a rich man and a gentleman.'

'But, indeed, sir'—almost stammered Harry Meade.

'There, not a word more,' said I with a laugh; 'I dare say you feel strange at the first idea of the thing, but you will soon take a pleasure in your new duties. Mr Spiller wants the place to be filled up at once. Can you be ready by Monday?'

'But, sir, thanking you most humbly,' broke in Harry, with a sort of desperation, 'I have made up my mind that I must refuse your very generous offer of the place.'

What a gasp I gave, and how my ears tingled, in sheer astonishment. I declare that I could hardly believe the evidence of my hearing.

'To refuse the place,' said I very slowly.

Then Harry ceased stammering, and spoke out like a man, in blunt speech, but with a sort of native delicacy that would have touched me at another time. He was very grateful to me, that he begged me to believe, but he could not leave Sherborne village, he could not

leave his ailing grandfather, now eighty years of age, and who had brought him up from the time when he was a helpless boy, and both his parents sickened and died of the typhus fever, then scouring the county. Lucy Brand, too—his sweetheart—whom he hoped to marry next year, if all went smoothly—Lucy would not leave the old dame, nor would Widow Brand be happy away from the parish. So, if I would be so kind as not to be offended with him—

'You prefer to kick down your own fortune, and to cast away a good chance of getting on in life,' said I, very crossly; 'please yourself, of course. The place of light-porter to Parkes and Spiller need not go begging, I can assure you. And may I ask, without trespassing on your secrets, if you and Miss Lucy there are simpletons enough to marry, with every prospect of having to maintain a family on sixteen shillings a week?'

'Why, no, sir,' answered Harry, hesitatingly and slowly, for he was hurt at my angry and sarcastic tone—'no, sir, we have no present intention that the wedding should be soon. I don't wish to see Lucy poor and overworked at home, nor yet to be a drag on Lucy's old mother, who don't get on overwell at the shop. But old Roger South, the carrier, is getting into years, and stiff in the joints, and in a twelve-month or more his horse and cart will be for sale, as well as the goodwill of the business. And I'm known down road already, sir, and I've managed to save a bit, and Widow Brand have also saved a few pounds; and if we can but put together enough to help me to step into Roger South's shoes, why, then'—

'That, then,' said I, with great scorn, 'is the height of your ambition, is it? To be a wretched village carrier, joggling from hamlet to hamlet with parcels and hampers, and with no horizon in your hopes beyond that which is bounded by the market-town. I've been disappointed in you, that's all, Mr Harry Meade. I thought you had been a lad of more mettle than you turn out to be. Do you know what you've thrown away? Do you know the wages our head men receive? Many a curate would give his ears for as ample a salary. You might have been an engineer, and died rich and famous, but I see you haven't the right stuff in you, my man.'

Giving an emphatic knock upon the road with the ferrule of my walking-stick, I wheeled short round, and trudged away without another word. I was very angry and indignant, as we are apt to be when we mean well towards somebody, and the would-be protégé prefers struggling on unhelped to accepting our proffered aid. I had really taken a great fancy to Harry Meade; I had imagined that he had in him a spice of the patient, inflexible, yet supple spirit that inspired the great chiefs of our profession, the Stephensons and Arkwrights, whose names are landmarks among us. Now, however, I gave the recreant up. I wrote off to Spiller, bidding him get the best man he could at Leeds; there was no hope of picking up a worthy recruit among the *clowns* and *clodhoppers* (clowns and clodhoppers being both of them deeply interlined, in sign of contempt) by whom I was temporarily surrounded. I told Mrs Parsons that in my opinion her precious retainer, Harry Meade, was a great blockhead, and would die in the workhouse. I gruffly rejected Harry's future services with the landing-net, and indeed, finding I could not fish satisfactorily without my instructor, gave up the sport in disgust. When I went into Widow Brand's little shop to buy a hammer, and Lucy, who served me with the article in question, gave me a tearful look from her pretty black eyes, and ventured to express a modest hope that I 'would not be angry with Harry, who was so sorry at the loss of my honour's good opinion,' I answered the poor girl as surly as a bear could have done; in fact, I behaved like what I was for the moment, a positive, capricious old fellow, who resents any opposition to his will. The reason of

my buying the hammer was this. My stock of pastimes, never a very large one, had been desperately encroached upon by the laying up in ordinary of my rod and line. It was then that I remembered my former liking for geology, a science of which I possessed a smattering, and which often goes hand in hand with an engineer's professional attainments; I bought a hammer, therefore, and explored the country in various directions, cracking pebbles, knocking fragments off weather-beaten rocks, and making a little collection of minerals. One afternoon, intent upon my new hobby, I had strayed far up the dale, and had entered one of the narrow glens that opened laterally from it. The scene was singularly wild, for the gray and reddish rocks rose precipitously, like high walls, to left and right; huge stones were flung about, as if hurled by giants in sport or anger; and the little stream rushed with a hoarse roar over a bank of pebbles, and tumbled foaming into a pool many feet below. There were scarcely any traces of vegetation in this desolate nook, and none of human life or industry.

Stop! I was wrong there. That heap of crumbling masonry must be the ruins of what appears a small tower. A tower! and in such a place. My curiosity was instantly excited, and I resolved to examine it. It cost me a good deal of trouble to scramble up the breakneck path, slippery with the washing of continual rains, and excessively steep, but at last I reached the ruins. The so-called tower was nearly choked up; it was a mere heap of stones and mortar, but a few green bushes grew on the broken roof, embedded in earth and lime, and a dozing owl, disturbed by my tread, rushed whirling out, gave a staggering wheel in the air, and flew hooting up the glen. Some lumps of dull metallic appearance, lying mixed with cinders and rubbish, caught my eye, and I knew them to be dross, and guessed at once that the building I had reached was one which had belonged to some disused mine. I sat down, hot and panting after my climb up the steep hillside, and began, half mechanically, to tap the pebbles with my hammer.

'Oolite,' I muttered; 'and this is schist or shale, I don't know which, and I haven't got my little glossary with me; and these are flints, waterworn and rounded; and this must be limestone abraded from the — Hilloa! what's this?'

I might well be surprised. A huge dark shadow, the distinct outline of a human form, had fallen across me quite suddenly. Not a step had I heard; nor would it have been easy for any one, however light-footed, to approach me in that rugged place without rattling down a shower of stones. Nevertheless, the shadow fell across me; and when I looked hastily up, I saw the owner of the shadow at my elbow, and looking down upon me—a big, loosely-hung, powerful man, dressed in a worn suit of dark-gray woollen, cut in artisan fashion. The man had a handsome swarthy face enough, though it was gloomy and careworn, though the thick curling hair about the temples was grizzled prematurely, and though the dark eyes had a moody depth in them that was almost menacing. This person's age may have been thirty-eight, but he looked at first sight much older: his complexion was dusky enough for a Spaniard, and his countenance had something in it that riveted the attention.

'Hilloa! what's this?' I cried; 'I beg your pardon, but how did you come here so silently?'

'I? I were here all the time,' answered the tall stranger. 'It's I that ought to be wondering, not you. Mostly I have this place all to myself, master.'

I told the man I was not aware that I had been trespassing, but that, if my presence caused any inconvenience, I was willing at once to withdraw. I was only resting, I told him, after a scramble up to the site of the old tower, and had little expected to meet with anybody in a place so lonely and melancholy.

There was a peculiar gravity and a melancholy sweetness in the man's tone as he said: 'True, master. 'Tis lonesome and sad to look at, and strange gentlefolks are nowadays common here. But it's all written—it's all written, and quite sure to come true.'

Here he muttered unintelligibly, but presently assured me that I was by no means an intruder—that the hillside was equally free to us both—and that he hoped I had not taken umbrage at his odd ways or bluff speech. I sat still, therefore, and began a conversation, for this man interested me a good deal. He was not an educated person, that was clear; but there was a thoughtful gravity in his tone and bearing which savoured more of the student than of the artisan, while there was something singular in the preference which he shewed for lonely spots and solitary musings.

'Yes, as you say, master, 'tis a wild, barren place; but it's just in places where leaf and flower refuse to grow that riches sprout the thickest underground. Fine fortunes have been made, ay, and ruined too, within a few hunder yards of this rubbish heap!' And the man kicked his heavy foot contemptuously against the hewn stones that lay at his feet.

'Indeed?' said I.

'Ah, yes,' went on the man; 'this were the smelting-house. Many a ton of good stuff's been roasted here. Many a thousand pounds of lead, and hundreds upon hundreds of ounces of good silver, comed out of that adit up there.'

And this strange fellow pointed to a small dark aperture in the rocky wall overhead, a little place, hardly deserving the imposing name of cavern.

'Adit?' said I. 'Do you mean that yonder fissure in the rock, that looks from here no bigger than a fox-earth, is actually the entrance to some mine?'

'That's the adit,' said the miner, again using the old technical term—'the adit of the great *Hesperus* mine, that were first worked afore the Reformation begun, what time the dale belonged to the old monks down at A—. It's belonged to a many since; some throve, most was beggared; so 'tis in mining—light come, light go: but there's wealth in the hills for all that.'

'The *Hesperus* is no longer worked, I conclude?' observed I.

The man said that was Gospel truth; the ore had 'cropped down,' the vein or lode having plunged in a downward direction, in one of those strange twists which baffle the miner's hopes; and thus it had come to pass that, after yielding lead for centuries in greater or less amount, the renowned *Hesperus* had been closed for ever.

To my query as to whether he had worked in it, the man replied in the affirmative.

'First time I ever stripped to go underground were when I was took on there. Father worked in the *Hesperus*, and there he died, too, smothered by a gallery caving in. I were thirty yard off; I heard him groan and cry, and I couldn't help him.'

'Good heavens!' I exclaimed, 'can such things be?' Not that I was unused to hear of sad accidents in the course of my professional experience, but that there was something in the impassive gloom and cool composure of the narrator which increased the horror of his recital. He took little notice of my exclamation.

'Miners' chances,' said he. 'My grandfather died in his bed; but often I've heard daddy say that most of his forefathers went to their last account in the dark, with scanty time for praying and wishing goodbye to their kin. After father died, I shifted to the Dripcastle mine—'tis shut now, and I'd have clemmed, mayhap, but that old Uncle Dick, that went to set up at Swansea, and got to own a sloop, left me a legacy. 'Tis nigh spent, but may be before it goes I'll have my turn of luck.'

With some trouble, I drew from this quaint personage what he meant by the expression, in my ears

enigmatical, 'his turn of luck.' It appeared that he was one of those half-visionaries who are in almost every region where mineral wealth exists, and who possess much of the speculative spirit of the gambler. Such are the Gambusinos of South America—such are the gold-seekers of the Abruzzi and the Carpathians—and such, in a slighter degree, are the 'lead-grouters' of the Derbyshire Peak. The man, whose name he told me was James Gasket, informed me that, by the peculiar local law and custom of the Peak, any person who should see cause to commence a mine, had but to knock off a piece of turf as big as his fist to establish 'a claim.' He could then pursue operations at his pleasure, and for his own profit, on condition of paying a certain fixed royalty or percentage to the lord of the manor; which royalty was duly measured from the raw ore by a proper officer of the Court of Barmoot, which took cognizance of mining matters. James Gasket had indelibly graven on his memory the names of the lucky adventurers who, within three centuries, had grown rich and powerful by such discoveries as these.

'Many a time, as you walk over these dales and mountains,' said he, 'you'll see a sparkle of shining lead through the turf, peering up at you, and twinkling like the eye of a little bird, or like that of one of them spirits that old folks say watches over the treasure deep down in earth. Most like, 'tis nothing—not enough lead to keep the panes in a cottage window together; but it may be the outside bit of a vein that would make a fellow richer than His Grace at Chatsworth there.'

He then went on to say that there was much 'guesswork' in mining operations; that many a mine had been abandoned, when it was on the point, perhaps, of enriching the workers; and that more than one spent mine had been re-opened at a profit by fresh adventurers. Altogether, the conversation of James Gasket was interesting to me, and none the less so because of the strange contrast which the man's natural shrewdness presented to the stolid fatalism with which all his thoughts were overlaid. I had never before met with so consistent a believer in inexorable destiny. Napoleon himself could not have confided in his star with more implicit faith than was shewn by this lonely miner. He was poor, and far from prosperous or contented, but he seemed to expect his 'turn of luck' some day, when a discovery of ore should make him a man of substance. It was characteristic, too, that he never appeared to dream of any other means of amassing wealth than by subterranean burrowings among the veins and lodes of his native county. With him, riches meant lead, and lead riches. Our talk was a long one, and the sun was dipping beneath the rocky ridge before I rose to go home. Gasket civilly assisted me to get down the slippery path, an attention not wholly superfluous, since I was but a poor cragsman, and presently we reached the bank of the noisy stream.

'My way is the same as yours, master, as fur as the cross-roads. I live at Burnt Barn,' said James Gasket.

So we walked together; twilight deepened as we went. I was curious to draw out my strange companion on some other subject than mines, and I did my best—in vain; try what I would, Gasket always got back to his hobby. It was not that he seemed ignorant of other things, but that he cared for nothing else. He had evidently some rude historical information, had read many accounts of foreign parts, and knew something of the recent improvements in mechanical and chemical science; but everything in his mind hinged on his own profession, its profits, losses, and hazards. Finding that I had to deal with a man of one idea, though that idea was subtly and completely developed, I came back to the only topic on which my new acquaintance was eloquent.

'Pray,' said I, 'is there not a mine of great extent,

called *Concord*, in this neighbourhood?' The man started, as if he had been bitten by an adder, and I could see, even through the dusk, that his face flushed all over with a dark glow, and his eyes glittered. He ground out some fierce ejaculation between his clenched teeth, and stood for a moment, with outstretched arm and frowning brow, in what might have been taken for a threatening attitude. Only for a moment; in the next, this strange fellow shook off every sign of passion or surprise, though his deep voice seemed an octave deeper as he replied: 'There is, master. Do you know aught about it?'

I told him that I had heard vaguely of it, as the place where Brand the overlooker, Widow Brand's husband, and Lucy's father, had perished by an unfortunate accident: 'He was drowned, I believe, or crushed by falling earth.'

'Drowned!' answered Gasket, in his deep stern voice: 'I was there at work at the time; and let me tell you, master, it was written before the world began that he was to be drowned in that pit. Who dare say it were not?'

He spoke quite fiercely and excitedly, and for an instant I began to be a little afraid of him, but the impatient mood passed away like a ripple on water, and Gasket began, in his calm, lucid way, to describe the *Concord* mine.

'An old, old place,' said he, 'older than most. *Hesperus* is a mushroom to it. This that we're talking of was worked in the days of the Romans; and it's a wonder to see how the mountain be honey-combed with galleries and creep-places. Not all made by pick and shovel, master. There's halls, there, and nat'ral ones, that a king would be glad to clap into his palace, all a-shining bright with spars and sparkling crystals like icicles. They crust the walls, I tell you, like frostwork on a window-pane, and they're like pillars holding up the roof, glistening in the light of our torches like jewels for the fairies' wearing—all colours, big and bright. And there's been a mort of lead brought out of *Concord*—not that that be the true name, for I've heard old men say 'twas called *Dripcastle* a hundred year back—a mort of lead brought out, and a mort of chaps' lives flung away. Mine's shut now.'

'Exhausted, I suppose?' said I.

'Exhausted!' said the miner scornfully; 'not so, master. The conceited London surveyor advised the owners to give it up, and so they did; but we Derbyshire men, we don't believe the heart of *Dripcastle* will be worked out afore England sinks in the sea.'

On this subject, I said nothing; I had previously noticed that my friend James Gasket was excessively sanguine, like most miners; but he had excited my curiosity, and I asked if the mine were far off.

'Five mile; not more. Better nor one mile beyond where we met.'

'Dear me!' said I; 'I should like to see it. I never saw a lead-mine, or indeed any mine but one of our Yorkshire coal-pits. I should want a guide, of course.'

Gasket volunteered to be that guide. He knew, he said, every corner of the dark subterranean as well as any man alive. And it was agreed that the following evening was to be devoted to the exploring of the wonders of *Concord* mine; that James was to provide lantern and torches, and whatever else was needful; that I was to pay him a moderate remuneration for time and trouble; and that we were to rendezvous at a place which he would indicate.

'And no place better than this, master,' said the miner, stopping short; 'tis on the road, and I live here.'

I shrugged my shoulders as I looked at the ruins of a farmhouse, the garden run wild, the neglected apple-trees almost choked with weeds and bushes, and the ghastly and blackened remains of a barn that fire had half consumed. The last, with its bare black

rafters and calcined beams, had all the air of a gigantic sable skeleton. Hard by the broken paling stood a guide-post, whose weather-gnawed fingers pointed four ways, up four muddy lanes. 'The cross-roads. Burnt Barn. Didn't you come past here?' asked the miner, noticing my surprise. 'Ah, you must have took the wrong turn, and gone round by the mill. Straight ahead leads you to the village, master, where you see the longest finger-point, for the writing be smudged out long ago.'

'But you,' said I, 'is it possible that you live here?'

Gasket silently pointed to a sort of hovel built of hewn stones that had formed part of the farmhouse, and thatched in a rough way, with one small window, and the door shut tightly to. I never saw a more cheerless dwelling.

I was just opening my mouth to speak, when the sound of hoofs came on the wind, and a man mounted on a white pony, with a basket on his arm, came trotting at a sharp pace, gaily whistling. I looked up, and recognised Harry Meade on one of his errands, the pony being one that belonged to the landlady. The moon was now risen, and the same light that shewed Harry revealed myself and my companion. I saw Harry start, and an expression of wistfulness came over his candid face, and for a moment I thought he meant to speak, but as I was haughty and cold in my acknowledgment of his respectful touch of the hat, he gave up the intention, and cantered on.

'At this time to-morrow I'll be ready,' said Gasket. 'One word, sir, before you go. Best not let out to any of those chattering idiots in the village where you are going. They never like a person to leave the beaten track, and they'd be for shewing you the stupid *Scrapperton* mine that all the Cockney trippers are took to see. Now, *Concord*'s worth ten of it.'

'I suppose,' said I lingering, 'there is no danger'—

'Not a pin's head. None for them that know their way about. Good-night, master. No, thank you—not a sixpence till its earned; and repelling my proffered half-crown, Gasket entered the ruined garden, lifted the latch of his comfortless abode, went in, and shut the door.

The next day, I observed that Harry Meade, whenever I espied him at his usual work in yard or meadow, touched his hat apologetically, looked at me anxiously, and was evidently dying to speak to me, but discouraged by my severity of manner; for I had decided in my own mind that Harry was but a milksop, and very ungrateful to boot, and henceforth I was resolved to favour him no more. Once, indeed, I fancied that the audacious refuser of the post of light-porter to Parkes and Spiller might have thought better of it, and therefore, the next time Harry fell in my way, I addressed him very stiffly as follows: 'I see you have something to say. Once for all, have you changed your mind, and do you wish to ask for the place I offered you?'

'No, sir, indeed,' said Harry reddening up; 'but'—

'In that case,' said I loftily, 'I desire to have nothing at all to do with you.' But I was not yet quite free from persecution. When my dinner was brought in, I noticed that Mrs Parsons was very fidgety and nervous as she helped the red-armed servant-girl to adjust the dishes and saltcellars. Presently, as she uncorked the sherry, she remarked: 'Begging your pardon, sir, if I seem to pry into your doings; I hear that you've been making the acquaintance of Black James the miner—and—and'—

'What, then, Mrs Parsons?' said I, not without asperity, for I had no notion of being henpecked by a landlady. 'Is not Gasket an honest person? He seemed so.'

'I've nought to say against his honesty,' said Mrs Parsons, fumbling with her apron-strings; 'only last evening, as Harry rode by the cross-roads'—

'That's quite enough, ma'am,' said I, taking fire at the mention of the deserter: 'Henry Meade might be better employed than in tattling about every person to whom your guests happen to speak; and if I can't be free from the molestation of spies, I must seek some other head-quarters, Mrs Parsons.'

The landlady was rebuked; she held her tongue and departed; and after eating my dinner and sipping my pint of wine, I sauntered out to keep my appointment with the miner. My anger, as I walked, waxed hot against Henry Meade. I thoroughly saw through his mean jealousy of my forming Gasket's acquaintance, and his contemptible wish to gain my good-will without complying with my request. I had been liberal to Harry during the time when he was teaching me to throw a fly and spin a-minnow, and no doubt he missed my presents in his well-merited disgrace; so, at least, I thought, as I passed through the village, and took my way towards the upper end of the dale. I was within sight of the gaunt gables of the ruinous farmhouse, when a chaise-cart came lumbering down the road. It contained an old gray-headed farmer, in his brass-buttoned coat of dingy green cloth, and two women. One of these was Widow Brand; the other, Lucy. The moon shone on us all, and I thought I saw Lucy give a little jump as she espied me, and I am sure I heard her say something to her mother about 'Black James;' then the cart went jolting on villagewards, and I forgot it. A minute more, and I was beside the guide-post; and there, with his powerful frame stretched on the rank grass, lay Black James himself. He started up, and bade me welcome; then he groped in a tuft of southernwood that filled up one breach in the paling of his garden, and drew from this hiding-place a couple of torches, a lantern, a crowbar, and a coil of stout rope with an iron hook at one end of it. These articles he very deftly slung about his person with the help of a couple of leather thongs, retaining only the lantern, which he carefully carried in his left hand. Then he gave an upward glance at the moon, across whose luminous disk a few fleecy clouds were sailing, looked up and down the road, and stretched his muscular limbs like a lion aroused from sleep. He nodded to me.

'Ready, master?'

'Quite ready,' answered I.

And off we went. The way was rough in parts, though not very long, but the clear broad moon illumined the stony path with sufficient distinctness. The miner accommodated his habitual lengthy stride to a pace better suited to a man of my years, and we progressed thus into the heart of the wild mountain country. Gasket was not, apparently, in a talking humour, and I had enough to do to mind my footing, as I stumbled among the stones at the upper end of the dale. We passed *Hesperus* mine and its ruined tower; we turned a sharp angle, and found ourselves among moss-grown boulders and splintered rocks. The stream chafed and frothed between irregular barriers of shattered stone; and the whole landscape, hill, crag, and river, as seen by the white moonlight, had an air of awful and savage desolation.

'There is Dripcastle mine,' said Black James, suddenly coming to a dead stop.

I peered about, but I could see nothing. Some broken walls and unroofed sheds were visible beside the stream, and these I guessed had been part of the works; but it was not until Gasket pointed out to me the darksome aperture of the mine, high up the shelving rock, that I could perceive it. At frequent intervals, wherever a fissure between the stones allowed it, stakes had been driven in, and these, bleached by long exposure to weather until they were as white as bones, were visible in the ghastly moonlight. Following the direction of Gasket's finger, I at last made out a small aperture, in shape not unlike some low-browed Gothic archway, partly screened by

a jutting rock. This, of course, was the 'adit' of the famous old mine; but to reach it a gymnastic effort was apparently required, and my resolve began to falter.

'My good man, you don't surely expect me to climb up there?'

My guide made answer that the approach was not so difficult as it looked. Women, children, even ladies, bent on a day's sight-seeing, had gone up when Gasket was a lad, and the mine in full yield. The stakes were sound—to prove which, the miner went up, hand over hand, with the rapidity of a squirrel, and dropped as promptly to nether earth again. We engineers are pretty well used to ladders, and I contrived to 'alume myself up,' to use Gasket's phrase, with less awkwardness than I had anticipated. We stood side by side under the rugged archway of the cavern. Behind was the darkling night—in front was measureless blackness, which the eyes could not pierce. Gasket struck a light, lit the candle, and carefully closed the lantern which contained it. The welcome beam illumined a small portion of the low-browed cave sloping steeply off into the mountain.

'Come along, master, if you've got your breath again,' said Gasket in his deep musical voice; and following him closely, I entered the mine, casting back one involuntary look of regret at the free sky and fitful moonlight we were abandoning. We were soon in the depths of the subterranean, surrounded by a net-work of galleries and passages, through which my guide picked his way with all the confidence which long experience alone can give. The floor was uneven and broken, the walls were slimy and moist, and from the low roof the water fell with a sullen splash, ever and anon, proving that the ancient name of Dripcastle was no unmeaning designation. On we went, now mounting, now descending a slope or a series of narrow and broken steps, sometimes in a large cavernous gallery, whence branched a hundred cuttings, still strewn with lumps of ore and chips of stone, sometimes squeezing painfully through a narrow passage, where the walls seemed to contract to crush us, and where the roof was so low that we had to stoop painfully. I know that my back ached, and my feet were wet and bruised, when my conductor came to a halt, unslung the torches, and jerking open the lantern, lit them both, and thrust one of the flaming, sputtering things into my hand.

'Look!' said he laconically. I looked. We were in a lofty cave, the roof and natural props of which had some fantastic resemblance to the interior of a cathedral. There were pillars, buttresses, side-chapels, a nave, and a choir. These were all blazing with sparkling spar, which incrustated nearly two-thirds of the rough rock, and flashed back all the colours of the prism in answer to the glare of our torches. Stalactites hung from the ceiling, like monstrous chandeliers and broken columns, some limpid as water, some glowing with many colours, but all bright and lustrous.

'How beautiful! how glorious!' I exclaimed.

'The great hall of the mine,' said Gasket hoarsely; 'there are three more, but they're a poor show to this. But there's a one thing more, hard by, worth seeing—not that you've seen half.'

There was something harsh and ominous in my guide's voice as he spoke; the calm music which distinguished his usual utterance was gone, and he now spoke hurriedly and gruffly. I asked him what he meant.

'The Sunk River,' he replied; 'tis one o' the wonders of Dripcastle.'

'It will be a wonder, indeed, if it beats this,' said I good-humouredly, resolved to take no notice of Gasket's curious change of tone, which was still more marked as he said the last words; and I turned to gaze again with genuine admiration on the rainbow-tinted stalactites and glimmering spar. 'The famous

Matlock and Buxton caves are larger, to be sure, but not more beautiful or remarkable than this little-visited place, and"—

"This way, master. Torches are burning down, and we'll want light!" interrupted the miner as he strode away, his nailed boots ringing on the jagged floor at every step. I followed him through a twisting corridor, the width of which varied constantly. During a part of the way, the air seemed to grow heavy and dull, and the gleam of the torches to turn to a dusky redness, but at length I felt a breath of cold wind on my cheek, and I heard the sullen wash and murmur of running water. An instant afterwards, we both stopped short, on the brink, as it seemed, of an abyss. A fissure in the rocky floor, perhaps ten or twelve feet wide, yawned in front of us. Beyond it was a natural platform, and beyond this again were the dim mouths of several caverns of different sizes and of varying height. The depth of the abyss I could only conjecture, but I plainly heard the gurgling of water from the blackness below; and the wind that blew from the gap was cold as ice.

"Look!" said Black James as he tied the lantern to the hook at the end of the rope he carried, and lowered it slowly down. I followed it with my eyes far, far down, but I could see nothing of the hidden stream. "Listen!" said my guide, and he flung down a heavy piece of rock. There was a long and distinct pause before the faint splash was audible. Gasket hauled up the lantern. "Nobody knows wheer the Sunk River rises, and 'tis only guess whereaway it goes, but here it is. The planks by which it used to be crossed are there"—and he pointed to some dusty timber in a corner—"and the veins beyond was opened first by the Romans, it's told; often we've found their queer old tools and cracked earthenware in some neglected place. The mine's shut now, shut and condemned for a bad job; but they're wrong. There's lead enough to roof all the minsters, ay, and cast all the bullets will be wanted for hundreds o' years—silver, too, bright and costly—all waiting, waiting!"

"How—what do you mean?" asked I perplexed.

The miner turned towards me; the glow of the torch lit up his swarthy face and dark, restless eyes, now bright with a strange light, like those of a wild beast.

"Master," he said in a deep, resolute voice, "you hearken. I owe you no grudge; but what's written is to come to pass; and 'twas to be that you was to come here, unbeknown to all, and me along with you."

I shivered involuntarily, and stepped back. "It's very cold," said I as cheerfully as I could; "suppose we go back to the open air."

"We come in, two of us," said Black James in his hoarsest accents; "one of us only will go back to the open sky and moonshine we left outside, the other will stop here—for ever."

There was something in the man's manner that excluded all idea of a jest.

"Do you mean to murder me, you villain?" were the words that broke from my lips, as I retreated a pace or two.

There was something terrible in the calm rejoinder: "I do."

An awkward pause followed. I measured my strength with Gasket's; I compared my thews and sinews with his huge limbs, and saw I had no chance. Still, I resolved to struggle hard for life. "You're mistaken in your thoughts," said the miner; "'tis not your paltry purse and watch that tempts me. Hearken, master; I'm no footpad. What valuables you've got about you shall sleep along with you till the day of judgment in that Sunk River under the earth, wheer mortal eye'll never see you more. Why do I do it? To be rich, man—rich! I've been poor long enough, and the mountain is full of wealth. But it's guarded! guarded!"

Here he began to mutter and croon unintelligibly, and the dreadful conviction flashed upon me for the first time that he was mad! I was in a fearful situation—far below the surface of the earth, far from rescue or sympathy—with a mad guide!

Gasket soon broke out into a loud fierce cry: "The black hound! the shaggy brute with red eyes and bloody jaws—but I know how to charm him away; ah! and the blue flames that flicker and sear the eyes—they'll plague me no more now. I shall be as rich as a king, for I shall have the silver the old Romans hid yonder, never to be dug up till a baptised Christian, come of his own free consent, shall be flung down into Sunk River, and you're the man."

So saying, he dashed down the torch, sprang upon me, and dragged me, a mere child in his muscular hands, to the brink of the yawning abyss.

"You're the man," thundered he; "and what is written *must* be. One of us two stops here for ever."

I fought and struggled in a manner that surprised myself; I even broke from Gasket's grasp, and ran some way before he overtook me.

"It's no use!" said he grimly, as he dragged me back, panting and spent—"no manner of use. We must all meet our fate. You must die to make me rich. I've longed for wealth from a boy, and I'd have had it long ago, but for that meddling dog, Brand the overlooker. He burned my star-book and divining-rods, calling me a fool, and saying I'd best stick to work or I'd go crazy—the brute! I paid him out well for it. Ah! they laid his death to accident, and never knew who sawed the prop, though I once let the secret out in my sleep—oh! and you know it too: tell it to the fishes, if there be any! And he tried hard to shake off my hold, and hurl me down the abyss; but I clung fast to him, though my brain reeled, and I was weak, and a prayer rose to my lips, and Death gaped for me. Just then, there was a shout, a loud outcry, a gleam of lights, and the rush of hurrying feet, and I was torn out of the madman's hands, and dropped, breathless, at the foot of a projecting rock. Three men, all with lights—three men and a woman, young and pretty, who seemed to guide the rest—Lucy Brand, by all that's wonderful! The foremost man, he who had torn me from Gasket's hands, was Harry Meade; the other two were labourers from the village. I have a confused remembrance of what followed—the hasty scuffle, the blows, the oaths, and the frightful howl of the maniac as he battled with those who sought to master him and secure him. Then Harry Meade cried suddenly: 'There he goes—the poor unfortunate creature.' And there was a plunge and a cry, and then a splash, far, far down in the hidden waters. The madman had thrown himself into the chasm which I had so narrowly escaped. I think I must have fainted, for the next thing I remember was being in the outer air, supported by kind hands."

"O, sir," said Lucy, "when Harry first saw you with Black James the miner"—she shuddered as she named him—"he misdoubted some harm would happen, for Gasket was known to be dangerous and wrong in his head, and mother always suspected him of having a hand in producing the disaster that led to poor father's death, and they do say he once owned to it when he was tipsy. So, sir, Harry would have warned you, but you wouldn't listen; and when I passed in the cart, and saw Black James waiting for somebody, and just afterwards met you, I told Harry we'd better see about it. Harry thought so too; and we made so bold, seeing *Concord* mine is looney, and *he* not safe, to—"

"To save my life, my good girl, and, believe me, I thank you for it none the less gratefully that I have been unreasonable, rude, and unkind to yourself and that brave good fellow there, your husband that is to be. Harry, I misjudged your character cruelly, and I beg your pardon. Will you shake hands?"

Before I left the village, much restored in health, in spite of the nervous shock of that adventure, I had the pleasure of attending the wedding of my humble friends, and of enabling them to be happy in their own way, by starting them in the carrier's business, with a reasonable capital and a brand-new cart and horse.

'But how,' I asked of Lucy, 'did you find us out, in the nick of time?'

'Please, sir, I was a miner's daughter, you know, and often, when I was little, I've sat hours on my father's jacket, watching the work go on, and I've brought him his dinner too; so I knew the mine well. And they say Black James used to go often to Sunk River, and sit there, dreaming and longing to be rich, so I thought we'd find him there—poor wretch!'

Such was the final epitaph of my terrible guide. His body was never found.

HOW WE HELP OUR HANDS AT BLEABOROUGH.

No town in all Lancashire is perhaps so little affected by the existing distress as Bleaborough. Its chief manufacturer was—happily for one of the few engaged in the cotton-trade who believed in the probable continuance of the American war. He accordingly, many months ago, made large investments in raw material, purchasing vast quantities of cotton at 5d. or 7½d. per lb. Even when the price of cotton rose to 2s. 6d. per lb., he resisted the temptation of selling to any extent, and has always kept sufficient stock in hand to enable him to work his mills at least four days every week.

Still, the badness of trade got at last to be severely felt even at Bleaborough, owing to the necessary closing of other mills, or to their working half, instead of whole time. It became therefore expedient to take active measures to assist our hands and their families. A committee was accordingly formed, the township divided into eighteen districts, and visitors appointed for each.

These visitors report every Wednesday the cases which have come under their personal observation, stating exactly the circumstances of each case, and applying for relief accordingly. Forms of application are also issued, such as the following, the facts stated in which must be verified by the visitor of the district in which the applicant is resident before relief is granted:

BLEABORO' RELIEF FUND.—DISTRICT NO.

Name,
Residence,
Number of Family,
Where last Employed,
Date,

Every applicant for relief must fill up the above form, and deliver it to one of the Visitors of the district.

The relief is not given in money, but slips of paper like cheques are handed over to the visitors, thus:

No. BLEABORO', 186 .
Supply with Provisions to the
amount of Shillings and Pence,
and enter on the back of this ticket what you supply, with
price of each article.

BLEABORO' RELIEF COMMITTEE.
A. L. GRATIS, Hon. Sec.

This ticket must be sent to the Secretary, at the Board-room, for examination at 10 A.M. on the last Thursday of the month, and the amount will be paid by the Treasurer on the following Monday.

The production of the above at any shop in the district in which the applicant lives authorises the shopkeeper to supply goods to the amount stated on the cheque.

These tickets, before payment, are compared by the secretary with the counterfoils in his cheque-book, which seems to preclude the possibility of imposition. Forms are also prepared to be sent to employers of labour to ascertain the weekly earnings of applicants in their employ:

THE BLEABORO' RELIEF COMMITTEE.

186 .

M

The Committee will feel obliged by your informing them what the Earnings of have been for the last weeks. As these inquiries are found to be the best means of preventing imposition on the part of Applicants for relief, the Committee trust you will excuse the trouble they are causing you.

A. L. GRATIS, Hon. Sec.

Date. Earnings. £ s. d.

1st Week,

2d do.,

3d do.,

4th do.,

Signature of Employer.

Please to enclose in an Envelope, and address to the Visitor named by bearer.

Every precaution is thus taken to prevent misrepresentation and deception. Encouragement is given to those who help themselves by making efforts to obtain employment; but in some cases of severe and long-continued distress, it is thought expedient to urge upon the poor the necessity of applying to the Board of Guardians, and the sum allowed by it is augmented by an additional grant from the Relief Committee. There is naturally a great reluctance on the part of many even of those whose want is the most urgent to become pauperised, and though in some instances that reluctance is hardly warranted by the antecedents of those concerned, it is a feeling which must be tolerated, even when we cannot sympathise with it.

One of the greatest difficulties the visitors of the Relief Committee have to contend with is to ascertain the exact circumstances of those whom they wish to assist. Families, from feelings of pride and independence, or influenced even by higher motives, go on week after week exhibiting no very ostensible signs of privation, living in the meantime on money raised on their furniture, bedding, and wearing apparel, until all at once it is discovered that those supposed to be keeping their heads fairly above water are in a state of utter destitution. The committee, besides giving away large quantities of blankets, clothing of every description, clogs and bedding, have met such cases by redeeming many articles which have been 'fastened' (that is, pawned) before the state of their owners became known. All such, together with new articles, are stamped as 'Lent by the Bleaboro' Relief Committee,' and therefore if any be pledged in future, the pawnbroker does it at his own risk, and is liable to prosecution thereupon. A large sewing-class, which is attended by five or six ladies every morning and afternoon in the week, except Saturday, is held in a large room over the market-place, and is well attended.

Altogether, the distress at Bleaboro' has been met with a spirit worthy the occasion, and the place affords a striking contrast to other towns, where the manufacturers have seemed incapable of entertaining an idea of the magnitude of our calamity until the pressure of poverty became bewildering and almost overwhelming. Our manufacturers have, in most instances, contributed very liberally, though there are still flagrant instances in which contributions are notoriously inadequate to the donor's means and the existing necessity. The exertions of the clergy of all denominations are beyond praise. Bleaborough has entirely done its own work in relieving its poor, has made no general appeal, and received no public aid, with the exception of three hundred and fifty pounds from the Mansion House Committee.

Each visitor, on application, is furnished with an order from the committee entitling to a certain amount of clothing, which he distributes in the district allotted to him.

RELIEF COMMITTEE.

BLEABORO',

186 .

To Mrs LINSEY, Storekeeper.

Please deliver the following articles to

Messrs

VISITORS OF NO.

DISTRICT.

Blankets.

Sheets.

Shirts.

Chemises.

Flannel Petticoats.

Cotton do.

Flannel Vests.

A. L. GRATIS,
Hon. Sec.

The children whose parents cannot afford to pay for their schooling, are furnished with a free admittance by the committee.

BLEABORO' RELIEF COMMITTEE.

To M

Teacher of

School.

Please to admit the under-named Scholars, and the school-fees to the amount of twopence per week, for each, will be paid by this Committee, on your sending me your bill for the same on the last Thursday of each month.

A. L. GRATIS, Hon. Sec.

BLEABORO', 186 .

The maximum of relief afforded raises the income for a single individual to 2s. 6d.; for a family of two, 2s. 4d. each; of three, 2s. 2d.; of four, 2s.; of five, 1s. 10d.; of six or above, 1s. 9d. A quantity of coal is also about to be distributed.

The duties of the visitor of an outlying district are very severe.

I was occupied from eleven to six the other day in calling with a visitor at the cottages of persons receiving aid from the Relief Fund, and he only got through half his weekly work. We visited about thirty cottages, and found the operatives who occupied them, though obviously in many instances suffering from extreme poverty, most patient and uncomplaining. The whole family were usually gathered round the fire; the father nursing the baby; the mother occupied in some household duties, either darning stockings and clothes that had been so often repaired, that it was difficult to arrive at any idea of their original material, or preparing some equally mysterious compound for family consumption; the children sitting quietly by, in some instances, it must be owned, very dirty and neglected in appearance, but in others—and those often the cases most requiring relief—quite clean and respectable. Possibly, in some instances, personal neglect may have the effect of exciting pity, while attention to cleanliness and decency may rather stand in the way of the very poor. I was told of a woman who, when distress was very great in these districts, about thirty years ago, expected the arrival of a relieving-officer, who was to inquire into her case, which was very urgent. 'Well,' said she, looking round her miserable cottage, 'though we be poor, we may be tidy and neat; so she and her children tidied up the rooms as neatly as they could, and put everything in order. By and by, the relieving-officer arrived, and just opened the door of the cottage; the poor woman asked him to walk in and see the utterly destitute state she and her family were in, but he declined. On her applying for relief, she was refused, on the grounds that she was not sufficiently needy to require assistance. In vain she explained the circumstances of her case; the word of the relieving-officer, who had seen nothing, was taken

before hers, and she was left to struggle on as best she could. 'And many and many a time have I cried over the injustice done me,' the old woman says even now, quite excited at the remembrance of an event which occurred a generation ago.

The poor are better understood, and cared for in these days. I have been into many of their bedrooms, and seen the terribly defective state of their bedding and blankets. Often, for a whole family, there are only two blankets for three beds; the blanketed beds are given up to the children, and contain three or four little ones each; the third, in which the parents sleep, being without anything. They protect themselves as well as they can from cold by means of the clothing they have worn in the daytime, or any old shawl or coat which is too shabby to pawn. Some cases of peculiar hardship occur. A most respectable good old man I know is a small proprietor of house-property, having four little cottages belonging to him. His tenants are quite unable to pay any rent, and the cottages being mortgaged, and he being obliged to pay the interest of the mortgage, his property is a positive loss to him.

In the midst of all this privation, I have not heard a single complaint, but, on the contrary, a hopeful looking forward to better times; and if any member of the family obtain a few days' work, the circumstance is mentioned without concealment on their part, though, of course, the amount of relief allowed them is thereby diminished.

GOLF AS IMPORTED.

THERE are some misconceptions that are no easily forgiven, even though they're no consciously entertained.

If a man says you're a writer, or, as they ca' it here, an attorney, he may mak' apologies, but aye likes him name the better for that. It's only gann frae the deil tae the deep sea when he protests on his word and honour that he thoct you were only a bit writer body. It's that verra circumstance that gars you grue. In a seemilar mainer, when an Englisher says that 'golf is a kind o' Hockey'—which he maistly aye does when he describes oor great national game—it maks nae maiter though he tells you he really thoct sae. Supposing I, a Scotchman, should tak upon me to aver that cricket was a sort o' 'trap, bat, and ball,' he wadna be by ordiner flattered, I'm thinkin'; and yet my faut wad be licht, *treerial* compared wi' his. For what is cricket, after all? Well, Scotchmen at least canna be said to cry up their ain accomplishments at the expense o' their neebors'; but the fact is, that the English dinna and canna understand games. I'm no meanin' cairds and billiards, and sic risky things as you lose money by, but neeborly oot-o'-door games. The general opinion o' strangers may be different; that's only anither misconception; but I think it maun be allooted that a native like mysel kens mair aboot the thing than a foriner. I maienteen, then, that we are an even-forrit, playful people; not preceesly kitten-like, 'pleased wi' a rattle, tickled wi' a straw,' or given to those exuberant speerits that betray the empty mind; but for keen, canny, steady judgematal play, we may clearly be said to hae nae successful competitors.

Look at curling, for example— But no, if ance I set out on that subject I may write till dooms-day; let me stick to golf. To begin, then: there is a picturesqueness aboot maist golfing-grounds forin to the alekit, clippit lawns on which the cricketer dirls and heaves the senseless ba'. I watched twa-and-

twenty pair English callants, eleven on a side, working at cricket for aicht mortal hours last simmer in a park little bigger or better than a yaird, in the heart o' London, and hadna I paid my saxpence to get in, and didna want to waste siller, I wad hae left the thowless game after the first ten minutes. Wearily waitin' for the 'overs,' and tethered to ae tiresome spot, the mislipped young men maun hae suffered sairly. Lookin' at their langsome play, my heart turned lichtly back, far frae the dowless, feckless loons in their yairdie, to the breezy links o' Gulane, stretchin' lan'art in by frae the sea, and speckled wi' keen golfers and bits o' wee club-carryin' laddies. The verra place was Health, and Beauty, and Freedom a' in ane, no to speak o' the swampy hollow where you were aye playing 'Two more,' by reason o' the prime natural diffeiculties, or the splendid rise at the top, back from which your ba' wad come for half a mile, and then you went at it again wi' a glegger e'e and a firmer hand. As I think o' Gulane, I feel the lift o' the sea-breeze in my hair, the sweep o' the view is before me, miles o' breezy knowes, behind them the strip o' plantin', and the ridge o' distant hill, and before them the great skinkie o' the sea, no forgettin' the sma' public, where the timeous 'drappie' could be got at any emergency, and when, the game ower, of needcessity a refreshment was aye forthcomin'. Shall I ever turn oot again on the links o' Gulane? Am I forgotten by thankless caddies? (Many a penny I hae gi'en them, and, for that matter, fourpenny-bits when I had nae change.) Is my name mentioned when gaun doon wi' the clubs, the Bailie and the rest step in to Niel's, to taste in a neeborly way? An it werena that the folk here are laithe to pairt we us, kennin they hae naeboddy to do their wark sae weel as we do it, I might ance mair drive a ba' ower the whinny links o' St Andrews or Musselburgh, or the sandy knowes o' North Berwick, or even the hazardless sward o' Brunsfield. No a single spot that I ken o' south o' the Tweed will compare in ony mainer wi' the least o' these, and there's only ane that seems to be conscious o' its ain merits. They tell me Blackheath has been a golfing-ground for a hundred years, and the folk there dinna mistak you for a postman if you turn oot in red wi' your clubs and your caddies, though they dinna seem to see yet, that when you cry 'Fore,' it's their ain faut if they get a bit skelp wi' a weel-driven ba'.

The ither day I gaed doon there wi' a guid-natured English loon, ane Jones, and had as guid a game as the callant's ignorance o't wad alloo me; and yet I had bad him read up the subject too. 'Now, get you some Handbook o' Golf,' said I—meanin' such a work as *Rambling Remarks on Golf*, recently published, and containin', let me say, some very pretty pieces o' advice—and mak yourself thoroughly acquainted wi' the theory o' the game, and then come doon to Blackheath wi' me, and put it into practice.'

'Why, there's not much to learn,' said he—'is there? Golf is only a kind o' Hock'—

'Be quiet, Jones,' interrupted I with indignation, 'and never set your tongue in motion about maiters that ye dinna understand. Just do what I tell you; and meet me at London Bridge on this day-week, for the eleven o'clock train.'

He was there, punctual enough, and the very first thing I said to him was: 'And hoo about the Handbook o' Golf?'

'Well,' says he, 'I ordered it at the bookseller's by that very name; but it don't seem to me very amusing, now I hae got it.'

And what do you think the creature had gane and purchased, but *The Hand of Providence Exemplified in the Life of John B. Gough*—a work without ae word about golf in it from beginning to end, and written against whisky, and clubs o' every description! However, there was naething for it but to go on, for neither Jones nor I could afford to waste a holiday.

Noo, since we were bound for Blackheath (where neither of us had ever been before), it seemed only fitting that we should tak a ticket for that place. In Scotland, that wad certainly hae been the properest course; but in England there is no end o' the devices for getting money oot o' your pocket wrangously; we ocht to hae booked orsels for Greenwich. As it was, we fand orsels no upon ony links at a', but in a sma' toon where naeboddy could put us in the way o' what we wanted. The folk kenned the heath weel enough, they said, but they had never taken account o' ony golfers (if you can picture to yourself onything so extraordinary!); and but for a gleg postman, we micht hae supposed we had come on a fule's errand. 'Golf,' said he—'ay, ay, there is golf in all the tents you'll find on the heath yonder.'

Golf in the tents! Think upon that, my friends on the richt side o' the border! I hae heard o' an honest gentleman drilling holes in his drawing-room carpet, that he micht hae a 'putting-green' in wet weather, but—'Come along, laddie,' cried I, 'for gudeness, and let us see what the purweel-intentioned creature means.' I had my suspicions at the time, however, and they werena lang o' bein' realized. The heath—which was a bonny place enough, wi' fine houses all round it, and parks and plantins in the distance, besides ane or twa capital pits in it, and big bunkers o' sand, and a little water here and there, and roads for 'hazards'—the heath was stuck a' ower wi' tents, as if an army was camped there; and oot o' the tents cam troops o' boys, each wi' a club in his hand, to play at that abominable bastard game o' theirs they ca' *Hockey*. However, they directed us to the *Green Man*, as being in the neighbourhood o' the golf-house; 'and there,' said Jones, 'in any case, we must lunch,' for, for eating and drinking, and expenses o' a' kinds, Jones was an Englishman all over; and as for putting a bit o' biscuit in oor pouches, and breaking it as we gaed along, in an economical mainer, he wadna listen to such a proposal. So, while he was ordering the most expensive refreshment before his appetite had gi'en him warnin'—the spendthrift—I looked oot o' the coffee-room to see if I could get a glisk o' the golf-house. And tho' I didna see that, yet I saw a sight that made my heart baith crouse and canty—a wheen lean, ragged, hungry laddies, wi' a cuteness in their countenances that ane rarely sees in this southern people, and wi' a certain dishonest sagaciousness about them that made me recognizee them at ance. 'You are Caddies!' cried I—'a sight guid for sair een.' I am richt sure nae ither profession save that o' carrying the golf-clubs could hae produced these genairic characteristics. 'Chances!' shouted they as we cam oot, exactly the same—only no wi' that fine roll o' the a' that maks oor native Doric seem se like to that o' ancient Greece—exactly the same as the lads cry at Brunsfield when they see the red coats daunderin' oot frae the club-house. 'But na, na,' said I; 'let me see Maister Dunn first, if you'll shew me where he lives'—for I wanted to ken the preceese tariff, before coming to ony terms that micht be by ordiner generous. And pleasant it was to mak acquaintance wi' that douce club-maker, and strange to see hoo instantly he kenned me for a compatriot o' his ain. There must surely be some secret affinity wi' ane anither among the folk o' oor nation, so immediately does mutual recognition tak place, even when

—as in my ain case—there is (as far as I can see) no the varra slightest accent that can betray a body to be otherwise than a mealy-mouthed southerner born within the sound o' Bow Bells.

Then he lent us a set o' clubs apiece, and set us gaun'; and I maun say that for an English links the place was no sae bad as you micht maybe expect. The caddies were not a grain ahint the lads o' oor country in keeping the wrang scores, and aye makin' oot that you had made less strokes than you really had, and that your adversary had made more—which was quite unnecessary in Jones's case, puir chap, for he was aye playing 'five mair' at the varra least. Only, instead o' saying 'Like as you lie,' as we do in Scotland, they cried, wi' a disregard o' grammar that is national, 'Like as you lay,' while they ca' the fore-caddie 'forcad,' and ah, hoo I missed the 'Be canny, be canny,' when everything depended upon a single stroke, and it was o' the greatest importance to give a *steimy*, only quite by accident, of course. But amaisit a' the technical phrases—although, indeed, without the proper pronunciation—had these English caddies picked up, to the great bewilderment o' Jones.

'You'll get into it directly, sir,' observed ane o' them in an encouraging manner, as my freend was striking off at the gravel-pit.

'But I don't want to get into it,' exclaimed Jones; 'I want to get over it; and I take it to be a piece of gross impertinence that you should prophesy any such misfortune.'

The reckless disregard o' human life, which is the chief characteristic o' the caddie, alarmed Jones in nae sma' degree.

'Now, in which direction am I to play, my lad? for I don't see the fore-caddie.'

'Right on to that stout old gentleman in the road yonder.'

'But if I were to hit him!' cried Jones in horror.

'Well, he should have heard me cry "Fore," replied the boy; 'and besides, if you don't hit him on the head, it'll never hurt him, bless ye.'

When we got into the roads, among the fine carriages that are so plenteous in these parts, Jones got particularly nervish, because the coachmen would sometimes pull up, that the leddies might see hoo the game was played; and a very curious notion o' it they must hae driven awa' wi', for Jones covered all passers-by within a radius of twenty yards wi' mud, and broke three club-heads by neglecting to use the 'iron.' But for my part, I wad never hae played better on any o' our ain links than I did on that same Blackheath, but for twa obstacles: the ane was the obtrusive and painfu' brightness o' the English sun, which has nane o' the chastened and mellow light which distinguishes it wi' us, but pours doon upon your face wi' the most prodigal excess o' light; the ither was, the enormous quantity o' ladies' schools. I am a sensitive man mysel, and the processions o' bonnie lasses that were continually passing and repassing on that heath were really ower muckle for me. I never saw onything like it. The hooes in the neighbourhood maun all be Saiminaries for Young Ladies. Custom may do much, of course, towards strengthening the nerves, and it is possible that the members o' the Blackheath Club may be able to follow the advice o' their caddies, and 'Play right in among 'em,' just as ane wad into a boys' school. But for my part, I couldna do it; I'd rather be bunkered first; and I wus bunkered mair than ance, through a chivalrous delicacy, which many may call Quixotic. Upon the whole, however, I enjoyed mysel to the mast-need; and I envy those gentlemen o' my ain country whase means and leisure permit them to come doon to this favoured spot and indulge twice or thrice a week in our national pastime. To them, their exile is at least considerably mitigated, and England maun be made less contemptible.

I maunna forget to say that Maister Dunn declined to receive onything for accomodat' us wi' clubs, saying that it was payment enough to see us doon there, patronising the noble game wi' sic enthusiasm. But for my part, I wadna hear o' ony sic pecuniary sacrifice—or at least o' ane to that extent. 'Na,' said I, 'thanking you all the same, Maister Dunn, we couldna think o' that; but since I am a Scotsman like yoursel, perhaps it will be pleasanter if you and I didna consider this as a maiter o' business, for "Hawks shouldna pike out hawks' een;" but as for the lad Jones, he has mair siller than wit; and what ane gets for naething ane holds at naething, so it is far better that he should purchase his experience.' And thus, without ony detriment to mysel, I did a good turn baith for my fellow-countryman and the puir callant Jones, wha will be a golf-player yet afore I've dune wi' him.

JACK SPRAT.

On the 9th of November, when the new Lord Mayor of the year is feasting her Majesty's ministers and other great folk on turtle and venison in Guildhall, begins the season of another style of banquet, more modest and less costly, which, during the next month or two, is spread in many a humble home, and is composed of those small fish which in England are called sprats, and in many parts of Scotland garvies. To some it may seem rather absurd to speak of such a vulgar dainty as a banquet, but those will not challenge the phrase who know how great a luxury these fat, savoury little fish—which, when properly cooked, are by no means to be despised even by the rich—are to the thousands who, during the chief part of the year, have to diet with sad monotony on gruel, or bread and tea. Coming into the market in immense quantities, and at a very low price, as soon as the herring-season has come to an end, the sprat furnishes a cheap and agreeable food, which is of great benefit to a large body of the population, not merely in the way of relief, but of essential nutriment. The old prejudice against fish as food, although on the decline, is still to be found strongly developed among many of the poor, but it does not seem to apply to sprats. No sooner do the costermongers of London hear that any vessels laden with this fish have arrived at Billingsgate, than they hasten thither to lay in as large a stock as their slender finances will allow. In the Brill, Clare Market, New Cut, Whitechapel Road, and similar localities, you may see hundreds of barrows piled up with glittering heaps of silver-hued sprats, for which these merchants of the streets find a ready sale. It is calculated that during the season between 40,000 and 50,000 pounds-weight of sprats are sold daily in the thoroughfares of the metropolis. Unfortunately, the season is but of short duration, ten weeks only being its average length.

The sprat is a much smaller fish than the herring, ranging from two to five inches in length, with proportionate girth and weight; and it is an old subject of controversy, not yet exhausted, whether the sprat is the young of the herring, or a distinct species. There are respectable authorities ranged on each side of this vexed question. A recent investigator of some experience says: 'I have never, despite anxious search, seen a sprat with either roe or milt; and after having examined many hundreds for the purpose of making such a discovery, I have naturally grave doubts about the sprat being a distinct fish, instead

of the young of the herring.' On the other side, the strongly serrated edge of the belly, which is observable in the sprat, is pointed out as a feature which is not to be seen in the herring, and which therefore distinguishes it as a separate species. The balance of opinion is certainly in favour of the latter view. The sprat is met with most plentifully on the coasts of Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, and Kent. On the Scottish coasts, it is not so abundant. The fishing-season commences early in November, and usually continues till nearly the middle of January. Nights that are dark and foggy are said to be most favourable to large hauls. The English fishermen go out spratting in stow-boats, averaging about fifteen tons burden. The netting used is very peculiar, being a kind of bag-net, fully thirty yards in length. Its mouth is furnished with a couple of stout beams, eighteen or twenty feet long, which answer, as it were, the purpose of jaw-bones, and keep the net open or shut, as may be required. The meshes vary in size, but are narrow even in the throat, and toward the extreme end of the net become so close as to bar the egress even of the smallest fry. Before the net can be lowered, the boat must come to anchor. The net is then hauled through the water by means of a hawser, seventy fathoms long, in the hope that a shoal of sprats may precipitate themselves into its gaping gullet. A large number of stow-boats are engaged in this fishing. It is usual for the crew to be joint-owners of the boat, the captain having, perhaps, four shares, in consideration of which he will have to keep the craft in repair; the steersman, a share and a half; and so on, down to the youngest apprentice, who will hold a half or a quarter of a share. Most of these partnerships are held, it is said, in particular families, and have descended as heritages through many generations. In Scotland, sprats are caught with the seine-net, similar to that used for herrings and pilchards, only much smaller in the mesh. The very close reticulation of the nets, both of the seine and stow-boat kinds, is alleged, apparently with reason, to be very destructive to other descriptions of fish. Thousands of herring-fry are thus annually brought to an untimely end. On this ground, an attempt was made not long ago to obtain a prohibition of sprat-fishing in the Firth of Forth, but without success. Some years ago, also, a committee of the House of Commons recommended that stow-boats should be declared illegal, as they were so destructive to the more valuable kinds of ground-fish, but no practical effect was given to the report.

The use of sprats as manure is becoming of rare occurrence, but in the days when there were no railways to distribute produce beyond the range of local markets, the farmer often stimulated the fertility of his acres by a few cart-loads. Mr Yarrell records that in the year 1829-30 sprats were particularly abundant, and large loads of them, containing from a thousand to fifteen hundred bushels, bought at sixpence a bushel, were sent up the Medway as far as Maidstone to manure the hop-grounds. The danger of this manure is that it is too powerful, and is apt to produce rankness in the crops, if not administered sparingly, and adulterated with sand or other rubbish.

At Billingsgate, sprats are sold by the 'toss' or 'chuck,' so called from the primitive manner of measuring them out. The toss is about half a bushel in capacity, and forty or fifty pounds in weight. Its price varies from one shilling to five shillings, according to the productiveness of the season. It is estimated that the total value of the sprats sold in a season is between £10,000 and £12,000. This vulgar little fish is therefore the subject of an important trade, furnishing employment to a large body of men, as fishermen, merchants, and street-vendors, and involving the circulation of a considerable amount of capital.

ST ALBAN (PROTO-MARTYR).

Ah, could ye see it, there are angel eyes,
Clear faces, set above in the clear sky,
That smile, and smile, and fixedly gaze to see
How steadfastly I die. How long, O Lord
(On these blind souls), how long before thy light? * * *
They press and throng, the People—heavy-eyed,
They will not hear; yet I have been a voice
That cried aloud, and wept, and spared not
To win them from their idols. Now I die.
I have no crown of jewels; I have won
No jewels for a crown. Lord, judge me not!
But lift me through this death, and take me in,
Thy workman shamed—these fruitless hands, these tears.

Come! gather to mine end; come near, come near,
Ye people! See my vision of this land.
Behold, I look into the years unborn,
And, lo, a light is kindled in her midst
That sends a dawning forth, and sweeps the night
Across her utter skirts, and binding seas;
And, lo, I see men walking in clear day;
They wash with tears the blood their fathers spilt,
From hateful altars of the hateful gods.
Behold! the idols in the forest fall,
Forgotten clay; the clay-damps fester them;
The worm is trailed, and sleeps in their dead cars,
In their dead eyes; the rain-drops trample them,
To beat them small. And, lo, a vision yet!
I, first of martyrs of this isle, lead forth
A goodly company—meek, white-robed saints,
And martyrs treading joyful to their death.
I bless this land, which shall be trod of saints,
For in her midst the mighty cross, uplift,
Shall draw all nations with its healing arms.
I bless ye, spreading skies, for ye shall look
On blossomings of heaven in all the land,
When all the land hath ceased from her sin.
So, happy isle, I bless thee in my death,
For thou art blessed, and an isle of Christ.

Nay, mock me not, nor murmur in mine ears.
I die. What will ye more! Then bear with me,
And drown me not in tumult—bear with me.

Now, Roman, give thy stroke. Nay, tremble not.
Thy sharpness heals—it is to life—to life!
This death shall rid me of all bitterness,
All taunts of sin, all tumults of the flesh.
Nay, weep not ye who love me, or I weep.
What? send ye me to meet, with weeping eyes,
The angels' welcome, and the arms of Christ?
Ah joy! the shining ones cry 'Hail!' to me.
And Christ doth bid me in to take 'a crown'!
The martyr's crown! Sweet Lord! The crown of crowns!
The likeliest thing—so washed in blood and tears—
Worn bright with wrestlings. Such a crown for me?
It lives with stars, yea, suns of all delights,
And they shall brighten, though the red suns fade,
And these earth-gazing moons melt out with age!
Through any darkness of thy hidden face,
Thy sevenfold night, I would have striven to thee;
But thou dost draw me as a little child,
With all thy face of love—with melting eyes—
With lips that woo my soul from out my breast
To shelter in thine arms. Ah, tender Christ!
Thou hast drunk all the bitter out of death,
And left the sweetness of thy lips on it;
And in this cup of death, so honey-sweet,
I pledge me, Lord, that I shall surely stand
To-day within thy kingdom—at thy side.

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